



Six Lessons for All of Us from the Marshall Fire

**By Einar Jensen, Risk Reduction Specialist
South Metro Fire Rescue**

Could a wildfire like the Marshall Fire occur in our fire district? Yes. And because it could occur here, it's important that we consider lessons from that devastating wildfire and act on them.

South Metro Fire Rescue's Community Risk Reduction Bureau and its website are great sources for information on wildfire mitigation. Most property owners could benefit from the following mitigation tips:

- Remove dead leaves and needles from gutters regularly.
- Remove dead leaves and needles from the base of exterior walls and from under decking.
- Remove junipers from within 30 feet of any home, business, church or other structure.

Mitigation is effective at protecting our families and property from low- and moderate-intensity wildfires. The Marshall Fire was pushed by hurricane-force winds with gusts exceeding 100 mph. Mitigation is not effective against high- and extreme-intensity wildfires. That is **Lesson 1**.

- **Lesson 2:** When extreme wildfires are burning near or through neighborhoods, the only option is evacuation.
- **Lesson 3:** It's critical that residents register for their county's reverse emergency notification systems. We have to opt-in to add our cell phones to the contact lists for pre-evacuation and evacuation alerts from the sheriff's offices.
 - Those alerts include information on the incident, its location, its predicted growth, and where evacuees should go. However, if you're in a neighborhood or other area threatened by an approaching wildfire, you can evacuate before receiving an alert.
- **Lesson 4:** All families need a neighborhood evacuation plan. It should identify a location in a different zip code where family members will meet if they are separated when an evacuation is ordered or become separated while evacuating. It also should consider options for children old enough to stay home alone on any other day, but not old enough to drive.

- **Lesson 5:** We all need a family communications plan. As you are packing your car, you probably shouldn't answer calls from concerned friends and family about the impending disaster. Instead, they should call a designated family member who will act as the family information officer. You can check-in when you're able.
- **Lesson 6:** Inventory your home now before an emergency occurs. That inventory will make your interactions with your insurance agent much easier. As you create the inventory, you'll know if your insurance policy covers the proper value of the home and its contents.

For additional information on wildfire and disaster preparedness, visit www.southmetro.org or contact us at ReducingRisk@southmetro.org.